



MORE BEAUTIFUL HOMES

Furnishing the Finnish Living Room through a Design Competition in the Late 1920s

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MÖBLERING AV FINLÄNDSKA VARDAGSRUM GENOM EN DESIGNTÄVLING I SLUTET AV 1920-TALET

I denna artikel diskuteras möbelformgivning i relation till heminteriör och rumsligt arrangemang. Utgångspunkten är tidningen Suomen Kuvalehtis möbeldesign tävling och kampanj Vackert hem (Kaunis koti) som anordnades 1928–29. I slutet av 1920-talet genomgick både bostadsideal och boenderealiteter en kraftig förändring i Finland. 1800-talets borgerliga ideal avseende offentliga rum; salen eller salongen, herrummet och matsalen, som ofta utmärktes av detaljrikedom och konstverk, blev gammalmodiga. Nya ideal utgick från vardagslivets behov och spreds genom media. Artikeln visar att Suomen Kuvalehti var en stark opinionsbildare i hemmet under denna period.

Möbeldesign tävlingen användes för att förklara nya idealen. Debatten som tävlingen gav upphov till synliggör hur vardagsrummet under funktionalismen så småningom blev hemmets centrum. Vardagsrummet rymde flera funktioner och aktiviteter, från samvaro och måltider till skrivarbete. I heminredningen blev vardaglig skönhet och människans välmående viktigare än statustänkande. Syftet med tävlingen var att få fram billiga, praktiska, enkla möbler till vardagsrummet. Man ville ta avstånd från stilmöbler och skapa typmöbler för alla. Kriteriet för tävlingen var moderna möbler i finländsk anda. En av prisdomaren var arkitekten Gustaf Strengell, en känd smakdomare in inredning. Det huvudsakliga källmaterialet består av artiklar.

This article examines furniture in relation to the home interior as well as the spatial arrangement of homes in Finland in the 1920s. The debate over the ideal of the Finnish home was intense in the 1910s and 1920s. During these decades, Finland was undergoing major cultural, technical, economic and social changes, which made, for example, the older bourgeois ideals of a home

seem out-of-date. Furniture was an important element of the home interior, and also perceived as symbolising national tradition and culture. In homes, there was a growing need for new kind of furniture that would be cheap and simple. Therefore, standardised furniture became more common. Around 1920, interior architects and journalists shared the idea that the beauty of the home lies in its furniture.

This article explores the construction of the modern home interior with a focus on the furniture design competition and enlightenment campaign called *Kaunis koti* ('Beautiful Home'), which was arranged by the Finnish weekly magazine *Suomen Kuvalehti* in 1928–29. The competition was connected to the emergence of the concept of living room (*olohuone* in Finnish, *vardagsrum* in Swedish). In this article, however, instead of 'living room', I prefer to use the notion 'everyday room' (*arkihuone* in Finnish), which was the more commonly used term in the 1920s. By means of these two terms, it will be possible to show gradual shifts in practices and meanings. 'Living room' is the more recent and currently used term.

In the Beautiful Home competition, there were two novelties involved, the everyday room and type furniture. The magazine organised a furniture design competition to find ideas and models for the everyday room. The competition sought for wooden furniture suitable for use in the everyday room. According to the competition programme, the furniture was to include a sofa, a chair, an armchair, a sofa table, a dinner table, a desk, a writing chair, a bookcase, and a cupboard. The furniture had to satisfy the demands of modern times and the Finnish spirit. The public domestic space of the 1800s was differentiated. In the 1800s, the public spaces of a


"KAUNIIN KODIN"
KILPAILUJULISTUS

Suomen Kuvalehti julistaa täten huonekalujen piirustuskilpailun, jonka ohjelma Suomen Koristetaitelijain Liiton Ornamon kanssa yksissä neuvoin laadittuna on seuraava:

1. Kilpailu on avoinna kaikille.
2. Kilpailuun ottavat osaa kutsuttuina seuraavat huonekaluarkkitehdit: Elsa Arokallio, Rafael Blomstedt, Arttu Brummer, Birger Hahl, Einari Kyöstilä, Werner West.
3. Kilpailun aiheena on ehdotus arkihuoneen sisustukseksi, johon kuuluvat: sohva, tuoli, nojatuoli, sohvapöytä, ruokailupöytä, kirjoituspöytä, kirjottustuoli, astiakaappi, kirja-kaappi. Valmistushinta on oleva 25,000–30,000 mk. Huonekalujen tulee tyydyttää nykyaikaisia vaatimuksia ja suomalaisia henkeä.
4. Huonekalut on piirrettävä mittakaavassa 1:10 kaikilta tarpeellisilta suunnilta (projektioneilta) kahdelle piirustusarkille, joiden suuruus on 55 × 38 sm.

Piirustuksiin on liitettävä ilmoitus mistä kotimaisesta puulajista sekä millä pintäkäsittelyllä kalusto kilpailijan mielestä on valmistettava.

5. Piirustukset on jätettävä kiertämättöminä ja tunnusmerkillä varustettuina, kilpailijan nimi suljetussa kuoressa, Suomen Kuvalehden konttoriin viimeistään jouluk. 3 p:nä klo 17 tai postiin samana päivänä.
6. Palkintoina jaetaan 10,000 mk., 6,000 mk. ja 4,000 mk. jota paitsi kilpailun toimeenpanijalla on oikeus palkintolautakunnan ehdotuksesta lunastaa muita ehdotuksia 1,000 mk:sta. Palkintolautakunnalla on oikeus jakaa palkinnot toisinkin sekä tarpeen vaatiessa olemaan kokonaan jakamatta jotakin palkintoa. Työpiirustuksista maksetaan 1,500 mk.
7. Palkitut ja lunastetut piirustukset ovat Suomen Kuvalehden omaisuutta.
8. Palkintolautakunnan muodostaa kolme Suomen Kuvalehden edustajaa sekä arkkitehdit H. Rönholm ja Gustav Strenge Suomen Koristetaitelijain Liiton Ornamon edustajina.



KAUNI.
K O T

Fig. 1. Competition announcement and programme. *Suomen Kuvalehti* 44/1928. p. 868.

home comprised the dining room (*ruokasali* in Finnish, *matsal* in Swedish), the gentleman's study (*herrainhuone* in Finnish, *herrum* in Swedish) and the parlour (*sali* in Finnish, *sal* in Swedish). These were the best rooms of the bourgeois home. Especially, the parlour was formal in terms of its furnishing. The everyday room, on the other hand, served multiple functions, and literally, it was intended for general everyday use. This modern idea presented a challenging task for those participating in the competition.

The last twenty years have marked a 'spatial turn' in art history and other academic disciplines.¹ In this article, the term 'space' is understood to refer to physical space, a cultural text, which is analysed through the magazine texts describing interior rooms or spaces. The framing theory is an approach developed by sociologist Erving Goffman. Framing refers to the use of language, symbols and visual elements in public discourse. The terms and images used are usually carefully chosen to convey a particular message. They can affect the formation of public opinion. One of the framing devices is metaphor. The framing theory has provided theoretical tools in the fields of communication and media analysis.² Goffman's approach is valid for the purpose of analysing *Suomen Kuvalehti's* furniture competition and programme. The article is also written from an art-historical perspective.

There has been rising scholarly interest in the history of Finnish design, home interior and modern dwelling since the 1990s. Current research literature includes publications on specific interior designers and the profession of the interior architects.³ However, the interior and furniture design of the 1920s still needs more research. The decade has been considered as an interim period before Functionalism and the golden age of Finnish design, whereas the 1930s and 1950s have been the focus for much research. The modern furniture by Alvar Aalto (1898–1976), however, did not come to existence from nothing in the early 1930s, but rather it was a result of a complex historical development.⁴ Hence, it is important to investigate the late 1920s through exemplary cases in order to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the diverse phenomena in interior and furniture design. This article opens up new perspectives on the discussion concerning Finnish Modernism and Finnishness talk. Analysis of the magazine *Suomen Kuvalehti* alone provides new source material to the discussion about Finnish home and design. Also, the article clarifies the way in which discourse on Finnish home and furniture design is inseparable from America.

The article focuses on the analysis of the discussion related to home and furniture. What can the furniture of the 1920s tell us about the ideals of the home at that time? Did the magazine's competition promote the ideas of Functionalism? What were the shifts in the meanings of furniture and home

interior design? For what reasons did the magazine strive to campaign for more beautiful homes and furniture?

The principal focus of this article is then on furniture, but there is also an attempt to map an almost unexplored subject in contemporary Finnish art history, the role of art in the modern home in the late 1920s and 1930s. Were works of art used as objects of interior decoration? What did some of the key artists and designers of the turn-of-the-century think about Functionalism, modern furniture and home? The discussions concerning home and furniture are examined on the basis of magazine writings and some private correspondence.

THE HOME CAMPAIGN OF THE MAGAZINE *SUOMEN KUVALEHTI*

In the early 1900s, the aim of furnishing our everyday lives with beautiful things became more important. In Sweden, Gregor Paulsson's (1889–1977) pamphlet *More beautiful everyday goods* (*Vackrare vardagsvara*, 1919) and Ellen Key's (1849–1926) *Beauty in the Home* (*Skönhet för alla*, originally published in 1899) spoke for beautiful furniture and home interior for everyone.

In Finland, it has long been thought that, of all weekly magazines, the family-oriented women's magazine *Kotiliesi* played the leading role in the area of interior design in the 1920s and 1930s.⁵ Hardly any attention has been paid to *Suomen Kuvalehti*, which sought to elevate popular taste and made efforts to promote good design and housing through articles, competitions and campaigns. It assumed an educating role in relation to home interior design. *Suomen Kuvalehti* was a symbol of the era, and in 1928–1929, it was a prosperous modern picture magazine with a huge circulation. The magazine was able to maximise its use of photos. In 1928, it was probably one of the most important opinion formers in the country.⁶

In 1928, Hvitträsk, the home of architect-designer Eliel Saarinen (1873–1950) and his family, was presented in *Suomen Kuvalehti* as a beautiful home.⁷ The villa of a nationally valued artist was deemed as an appropriate model for the people. In the 1920s, artist villas were often showcased as exemplary homes by the weekly magazines and books on home.⁸ In 1923, Eliel Saarinen moved to the United States, and in 1930 and 1931, *Suomen Kuvalehti* published pictures of the Saarinen House (1928–1930), the new home of “our world-famous architect” in America. Both articles showed views of the Saarinen House's simple Art Deco-spirited everyday room, or living room, with a fireplace and a rug designed by Loja Saarinen (1879–1968). The everyday room was the most important space of the house, in addition to the din-

ing room.⁹ The magazine showed new interior design ideas for readers. By spreading the pictures of the everyday rooms in the homes of artists, architects, celebrities and persons of importance, the magazines advanced the knowledge of the everyday room, thus paving the way for it to become more common in homes.

In 1926, *Suomen Kuvalehti* campaigned for home ownership and actually built a single family house.¹⁰ In the same year, *Kotiliesi* also devoted a whole issue to the single family house.¹¹ *Suomen Kuvalehti* turned the attention of the readers to the United States, where its ideas for a more beautiful home, as suggested in its programme and enlightenment campaign, had been realised. It referred to the Better Homes in America Movement supported by President Herbert Hoover (1874–1964), who at that time served as Secretary of Commerce. The Better Homes campaigned for home ownership and home maintenance, improvement and decoration. The programme of the movement was published by the magazine. The goal of the campaign was to make better citizens with high morale.¹²

EVERYDAY ROOM OR LIVING ROOM?

In Finland, the Arts and Crafts movement introduced the idea of the living room as being the space shared by the whole family. In the early 1900s, the idea of an everyday room was adopted by the middle class in Finland, and finally, it became the centre of the home. The housing became gradually more private, while it previously was oriented outwards.¹³ In the 1800s, a bourgeois home included rooms where the residents could receive guests and visitors: the dining room, the parlour and the gentleman's study. They were all spaces of a public character. The gentleman's study seemed to be a man's world. In the layout, these public spaces were separated from the rest of the home, the private spaces. There was a clear differentiation of spaces within the home interior. Now, the everyday room was to replace the reception rooms.

As Pekka Korvenmaa has argued, modern furniture is not merely a matter of aesthetics and formal analysis, but also practical points are essential.¹⁴ An important way of understanding home interior and furnishings is through economic aspects, expenses, consumption, and standard of living.¹⁵ As early as 1882, the newspaper *Kansan Ystävä* discussed the expenses of housing and suggested to the readers that an everyday room could be more spacious and investing in 'better' rooms for receiving guests should be avoided. Not everyone could afford a large and handsomely furnished home as required by this style of living. The writer in *Kansan Ystävä* called for cheaper housing



Fig. 2. Bourgeois parlour in Helsinki. Photo Signe Brander 1908, Helsinki City Museum.

and more moderate lifestyle.¹⁶ Home interior and furnishings were tied to the demands of the social milieu and maintenance of high status in the social hierarchy. The standard of housing had to correspond to one's social status, which was expressed through furniture and other items of furnishing.

Literature and magazines played an important role in campaigning against the 'useless' parlours and promoting the idea of the everyday room. Everyday room was mentioned as the home's main space in Edward Elenius' (1881–1957) book in 1915.¹⁷ Changes in social life affected the home layout, and the home became a more intimate space. The luxurious 'parade' rooms became needless, and instead, the rooms for human well-being became essential, for example, kitchen, everyday room and bathroom.¹⁸ Families started to live more modestly without servants. The interior space of modern housing shrank. With smaller homes and less space, it was necessary to re-think the room layout, interior design and furnishing. Shifts took place in the meaning and use of the terms. The choice of words was important in the magazines and gradually the parlour was replaced by the everyday room. For example, in 1912, one writer stated: 'let us say everyday room rather than parlour, it serves its purpose better.'¹⁹

Everyday room, or living room, had been under consideration also in some other earlier competitions. For instance, in October 1908, the Finnish Society of Arts and Crafts arranged a competition to find furnishings for a

normal sized everyday room. The jury concluded that one of the designed sets was not cosy enough and it was more suitable for a reception room and a parlour than for an everyday room.²⁰ It would seem that, at least, the jurors and experts in furniture design believed some of the designers had difficulties in understanding the new criteria of the everyday room where the appearance of a formal parlour was replaced by the touch of cosiness.

In the early 1900s, the everyday room could have varied functions, and the writers dealt with the related problems. The functions of the everyday room could encompass a range of activities that had little or nothing to do with the parlour. In the 1920s, it was still under consideration what functions the everyday room could possibly have and for whom this room was ultimately designed and intended. The Swedish architect and furniture designer Ernst Spolén (1880–1974) spoke for the everyday room in the magazine *Kotiliesi*. According to Spolén, everyday room was not just a family room and a room for social life, meetings and entertaining guests. The everyday room also had the multiple functions of a study or reading room and a music room. His article addressed the problem of the proper place of the new apparatus, the radio, as well as the piano in homes. The everyday room could be used for sewing and darning, listening to music and programmes on the radio, and practising music by playing the piano. Everyday room was intended for all members of the family, but certain gendered roles were still defined. The image of woman as a homemaker was being promoted in Finnish society. As depicted by Spolén, a model father was listening to the radio or music, while a model mother was sewing or writing. An immediate reader reaction to this article was that the piano would self-evidently be placed in the parlour, which indicates that the concept of the everyday room was not yet known.²¹ In *Kotiliesi* in 1926, Spolén designed a model plan for a single-family house with a big everyday room and one big window. There should be a connection between the kitchen and the everyday room, providing easy access from the kitchen to the everyday room if the everyday room was needed for dining.²²

THE FURNITURE AND HOME OF MODERN TIMES – FROM ‘STYLE’ TO ‘FORM’

The appraisal criteria in the *Suomen Kuvalehti* competition were modern times and Finnish spirit. Modernisation of furniture should be based on moderate rationalism. The designers were not expected to be future makers that would predict future design trends and find innovative solutions for furniture now and in the future. In the competition, the greatest attention was

paid to the modernity of the chair, which was often at the forefront of discussions in the 20th century interior design. As a bad example of modernising the chair, the magazine gave international avant-garde and published pictures of a painted chair of Bauhaus and a Functionalistic steel chair by Mies van der Rohe (1886–1969).²³ They had been on display in the Werkbund Exhibition in the previous year. The selected chairs showed well Finnish attitudes toward pure Functionalism. Among the general public, negative images of Functionalism were dominated by the black-red chairs or “cold” steel chairs.²⁴ Photos of Bauhaus steel chairs in international news section were seen as astonishing examples of modernity.²⁵ Functionalism was found foreign and international.²⁶ For the sake of hygiene, however, Functionalism and steel-tube furniture were perceived to suit public spaces, such as a café, restaurant or hospital, better than the living room of a Finnish home.

The magazine organised the competition in cooperation with the Finnish Association of Designers Ornamo, founded in 1911, which considered the competition very important. According to a document found in Ornamo’s archives, the word ‘style’ (*tyyli*) was changed to ‘form’ (*muoto*) in the competition programme.²⁷ This demonstrates that the aim of the competition was the search for a new direction in furniture design rather than the imitation of old styles. In the competition, there was resistance to suites of furniture representing historical styles and revival styles.²⁸ It had been customary to buy furniture as complete suites, but the magazine now promoted the design of type furniture that was not tied to any particular room or environment. Type was universal, timeless and anonymous. There was no need to buy the whole set of furniture at once. Type furniture offered plenty of advantages over traditional suites at a lower cost. Items of furniture could be used individually and they were often easily movable.²⁹

The rise of type furniture was linked to the overall change as regards the Finnish home and the increasing trend towards simplicity. At the end of the 19th century, paintings were seen as the essentials of the beautification of the home interior.³⁰ The walls of the parlour could be filled with paintings, one next to the other. The letters of an artist and furniture designer allow us to glimpse into the changed situation in the early 1930s. Count Louis Sparre (1863–1964) was a painter as well as a furniture and interior designer who had established the Iris company (Aktiebolaget Iris 1897–1902) in Porvoo and, later on, a drawing office (Konstindustriell Ritbyrå Eva & Louis Sparre).³¹ In 1933, he wrote privately to his friend, the sculptor Emil Wikström (1864–1942) about the modern era, its phenomena and new artistic trends. At that time, in Sparre’s opinion, it was not appreciated as modern furnishing to have paintings hanging on the walls of one’s home. He compared modern domestic

interior and furniture to the sterile hospital interior with medical furniture and instruments. According to Sparre, who at that time was living in Sweden, a modern home meant that one had to live in a room similar to an operating room, eat at an operating table and sit in a chair resembling of gynaecological research equipment. The artist's work was negatively affected by the new home decoration ideals. Portrait commissions were infrequent, and it was difficult to sell paintings.³² It seems that some older artists were suspicious of Functionalism, the modern furniture and home with a kitchen looking like a laboratory. Sparre wrote from own experience that the design trend that put emphasis on simplicity had no place for paintings and figurative works.

Sculpture as such was understood as a rather recent form of art in Finland, and it was seldom recommended to be used in the domestic interior. Sculpture was ultimately considered as being more outdoor than indoor art,³³ and sculptures could also be quite expensive. Anyway, in the 19th century Europe, home decorators were fascinated with small-scale sculptures, statuettes and busts. Some were copies, others unique pieces of art coming from an artist's studio.³⁴ Emil Wikström, for example, received commissions for small sculptures. However, in 1935, Wikström doubted in a press interview that there was hardly anyone that purchased sculpture for their home.³⁵ Times had changed in the use of art, and art, as anything else, had to be useful.

THE FINNISH SPIRIT – BACK TO THE RURAL IDIOM

The magazine *Suomen Kuvalehti* stated that it was more difficult to define the Finnish spirit than the demands of modern times. According to the magazine, real Finnishness did not exist in the design of that time.³⁶ In their search of the Finnish spirit, designers were recommended to look back to earlier periods and homes in rural Finland. Finnish peasant culture was seen as being threatened by modern urban ideals.³⁷ The magazine was looking for Finnish national furniture comparable to the design in the Nordic countries, especially Sweden.

The magazine used several framing techniques, such as myth-making, slogans, tradition and contrast, in order to convey its judgement concerning proper domestic interior design and furniture. For instance, the magazine promoted the interpretation of Finnishness by presenting *tupa*, the traditional multipurpose main room of Finnish homes. The multipurpose main room in a traditional Finnish peasant dwelling is called *tupa* (or *stuga* in Swedish). According to *Suomen Kuvalehti*, *tupa* represented the finest and the clearest example of indigenous Finnish culture, as shown in the photo from Eastern

Finland.³⁸ The big everyday room was meant for everyone and for various functions from handicrafts to having a meal.³⁹ In the magazine, the spacious size of tupa was seen as an admirable quality. It was not a room filled with lots of individual items of furniture, but instead, its fixed furnishings gave a plain and simple impression.⁴⁰ The emphasis on domestic wood including oak, birch, alder and pine represented an example of the search for Finnish spirit.

The only national trend in art, or an art movement that was a manifestation of nationalism, was National Romanticism at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. However, the magazine took for granted that the old National Romantic style was out of question in this competition. The concept of “national” was defined through negations by the magazine. The magazine condemned any Anglo-American inspired furniture, such as the English easy chair and interior design examples offered by the American films. The magazine was ambivalent about the American impact on the Finnish culture. On the one hand, it persistently discussed American homes and domestic interiors and followed American models, providing the readers with examples of contemporary American everyday rooms, but on the other hand, the writers and editors of the magazine were worried about the foreign influences and the threat

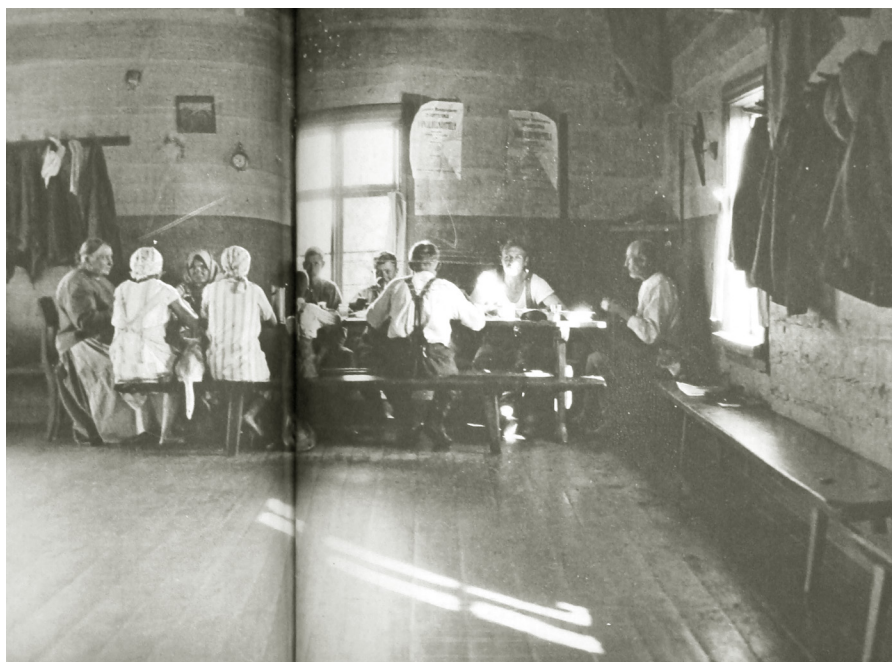


Fig. 3. The main room called stuga or tupa. Photo published in *Suomen Kuvalehti* 46/1928. pp. 1960–1961.

of the influence of the American films on the Finnish culture and homes. The overall message of the magazine was that instead of importing items or influences from other countries, furniture and interior design should rely on domestic ideas and heritage. The cosiness of the interior had to be consistent with the country. Kyllikki Pohjala, for example, devoted an article to American home decoration and presented the rise of the new profession of interior designers. According to her, interior design flourished in the United States, where homeowners, not just the well-off or wealthy customers, hired interior decorators and designers, giving them full responsibility for the furnishings and interior design of their homes. Anyhow, she concluded her article with the hope that Finland would keep on building on its own domestic ground in interior design.⁴¹

By the 1930s, the profession of interior decoration was established in America.⁴² In Finland, there was also great enthusiasm for furniture design and home decoration in the 1920s. Education, journalism, marketing and furniture production supporting the profession developed. During the inter-war years in Finland, the art of weaving experienced a renaissance, as pointed out by Leena Svinhufvud.⁴³

THE COMPETITION RESULT

The competition result was announced in the Christmas number of *Suomen Kuvalehti* in 1928. The magazine had received altogether 48 designs the majority of which were submissions by professional designers. Thus, the magazine had the reason to be satisfied with the consideration and the participation shown by the professional designers. The number of participants reflected the growth of the design profession. Nevertheless, the competition did not meet the most important expectations of the magazine because it did not provide answers to the question what the everyday room furniture should be like, given the criteria and qualities of Finnish spirit and modern times. Instead of awarding three winners, prizes were given to ten competition entries. The prize, 3000 Finnish marks, were won by designer Werner West's (1890–1959) *Red Triangle* (*Punainen kolmio*), Hongell & Forsström's joint entry *Birch* (*Koivu*), architect Veikko Leisten's (1896–1970) *Christmas Present* (*Joululahja*), and Evert Toivonen's *K. Suite* (*K. Kalusto*) and *S. K. L.* Other prizewinners were architect Elsa Arokallio (1892–1982), architect Elsi Borg (1893–1958), designer Arttu Brummer (1891–1951), furniture designer Einari Kyöstiä (1892–1981) and architect Ragnar Ypyä (1900–1980), who got 1000 Finnish marks. Most of the entries awarded in the competition made a compromise

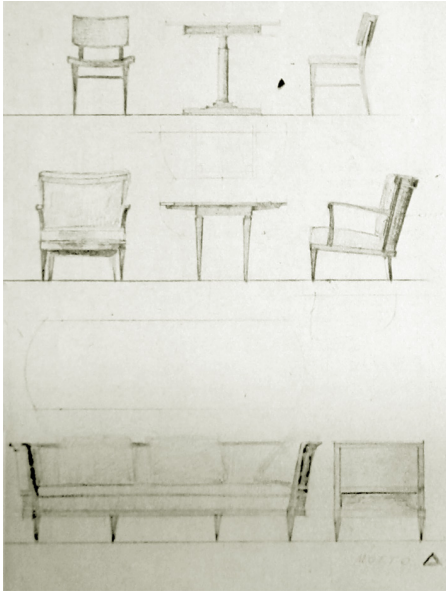


Fig. 4. Werner West, *Red Triangle* (*Punainen kolmio*). Competition design published in *Suomen Kuvalehti* 1/1929. pp. 19–22.

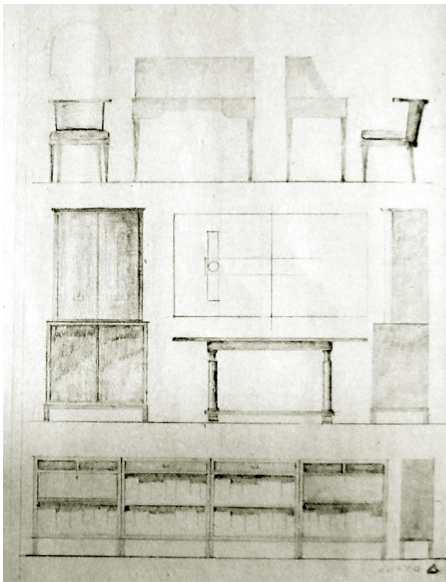


Fig. 5. Werner West, *Red Triangle* (*Punainen kolmio*). Competition design published in *Suomen Kuvalehti* 1/1929. pp. 19–22.

between modern Functionalism and traditionalism. The dominant feature was the cubic character of the furniture. The straight lines were softened by curves. Some of the cabinets and the tables were decorated with design of geometric shapes. The first prize could not be given to any design due to their lack of comfort. The notion of comfort was at the heart of home interior.⁴⁴ Above all, the entry by West, *Red Triangle*, represented new design thinking, ‘everyday wood Functionalism’. His furniture was reduced to simple forms. This simplicity set West’s entry apart from other entries.

The competition proved a disappointment, just like the first furniture fair in Finland held in 1927. According to the judges, none of the submitted designs could be recommended for manufacturing and the model drawings were not appropriate for circulation.⁴⁵ However, the overall picture of the Finnish furniture design of the 1920s was not so gloomy. It is worth mentioning that, for example, a writer in *Kotiliesi* paid positive attention to the everyday room settings displayed at the first furniture fair, and in particular, to the everyday room of the rural home with Finnish ryas and rag rugs designed by architect Elna Kiljander (1889–1970) and to the everyday room designed by Werner West (1890–1959) for Stockmann’s Department Store.⁴⁶

Architect Gustaf Strengell (1878–1937) was a jury member representing the Finnish Association of Designers Ornamo. In his opinion, the worst thing about the design proposals was that they did not capture the purpose of the competition. The purpose of the competition was to bring about simple, cheap, practical and cosy furniture for the everyday room that would be suitable for magazine readers. The scale of furniture had to be taken into consideration. However, most design proposals were too exquisite or luxurious, they were designed more for the traditional parlour and gentleman's study than for the modern everyday room. According to the competition rules, the choice of material was confined to domestic wood, but the entries would have demanded other woods, or the wooden materials were too expensive and complicated, and therefore unsuitable for industrial mass production.⁴⁷

Strengell suggested improvements in furniture design due to the competition result. He was an established expert in interior design. His book *Hemmet som konstverk* (*Koti taideluomana* in Finnish, 'The home as a work of art'), published in 1923, dealt with the question of what good taste in interior design currently was, and the book was meant mainly for the wealthy. In the aftermath of the competition, Strengell offered as

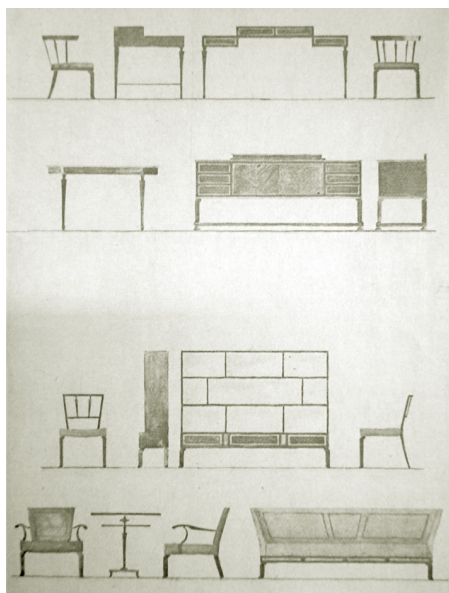


Fig. 6. Hongell & Forström, *Birch (Koivu)*. Competition design published in *Suomen Kuvalehti* 1/1929. pp. 19–22.

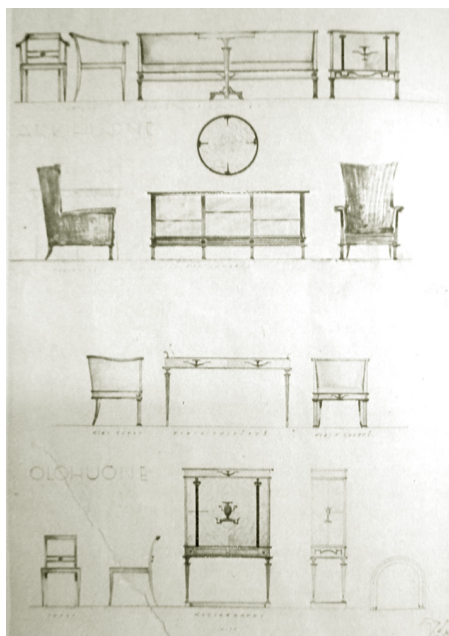


Fig. 7. Evert Toivonen, *K. Suite (K. Kalusto)*. Competition design published in *Suomen Kuvalehti* 1/1929. pp. 19–22.

examples the leading furniture designer of the era, Carl Malmsten (1888–1972) in Sweden, and the designers of the eighteenth century.⁴⁸ Malmsten used Swedish culture and nature as starting points for his designs. He was an admirer of handicrafts influenced by the Swedish peasant culture that he had seen, for instance, in the Nordiska Museet and Skansen in Stockholm. He has often been described as a traditionalist, but he was also a pioneer in simplifying furniture construction. Therefore, Malmsten can appropriately be considered functionalist traditionalist. According to Kerstin Wickman, Malmsten and functionalists had fundamentally the same view of the needs of the home.⁴⁹ Strengell argued that, to achieve sustainability and usability, the furniture-maker and designer had to be one and the same person. Carl Malmsten and other old master designers were carpenters themselves, which Strengell found ideal.⁵⁰

Furniture design had to get more continuity and certainty, a firm tradition that would not be confused by variation of styles. The competition opposed the idea of furniture and architecture as a style. The critique of the very idea of style and historical styles became central in Modernism. In the same year, the magazine chose the traditional Nakkila rocking chair as the only perfectly functionalist piece of furniture. It was an ideal, timeless type that was not a representative of any style. It lacked personality, the individualism related to the designer. It was made collectively and produced as a result of co-operation, just like in industrial serial production. As a chair, it was comfortable, and the use of wood in its construction was admirable. Indeed, it is a perfectly functionalist piece of furniture.⁵¹

CONCLUSION – TOWARDS GREATER OPENNESS

The home campaign and the furniture design competition were arranged in the late 1920s, at the time of major changes in society. The ambitious goals could not be totally carried out. The competition left the jury doubtful about the current state and future direction of furniture design and interior decoration, but it also paved the way for the future design. Later in the 1930s, the concept and the furnishings of the living room were established in Finland: the combination of a sofa, two armchairs and a coffee table became commonplace.⁵²

Nowadays, when architects' interior plans emphasize openness and free flowing space, the living room is not as separate a room as it was in the 1920s. To encourage interaction between the inhabitants and the guests, the kitchen often opens into the living room. The kitchen, once private and hidden in

the back of the house, has become a more public and open space.⁵³ In the late 1920s, the home interior and the spatial arrangements were constructed through the media, whereas now, in the 2000s, we can speak of a transparent media home with glass walls.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the anonymous referees for their valuable comments. This article is dedicated to the memory of my mother.

NOTES

- ¹ Warf & Arias 2008, 1–10.
- ² The framing theory of Erwin Goffman: Goffman 1974. Issue definition (framing). *Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods* 2008, 395–396.
- ³ On the profession of interior architects in the 1940s and 1950s, see Aaltonen 2010. On furniture Sarantola-Weiss 1995, Sarantola-Weiss 2003. On Werner West Karttunen 2006 and *Nykyaikaisia huonekaluja* 2014. On the modern dwelling Saarikangas 1993; Saarikangas 2002.
- ⁴ Korvenmaa 2010, 41; Kalha 1997, 25.
- ⁵ Rönkkö 1986, 117; Saarikangas 1993, 215; Sarantola-Weiss 1997, 243; Sarantola-Weiss 2003, 151, 154. See also the doctoral dissertation: Heinänen 2006. Seija Heinänen's primary material consists of the journals and magazines *Kotitaide*, *Ateneum*, *Koti ja Yhteiskunta*, *Euterpe*, *Käsiteollisuus*, *Käsityö ja teollisuus* and *Domus*.
- ⁶ Symbol of the era: Tarkka 1980, 18, 136–141.
- ⁷ Vikman 1928, 1215–1217.
- ⁸ Kruskopf 1989, 179; Rönkkö 1986, 17.
- ⁹ Professori Eliel Saarisen kodista, 1931, 1532–1533; Kuinka Eliel Saarinen nykyään asuu, 1930, 1636–1637. On Saarinen House Craig Miller 1983, 93–95.
- ¹⁰ Kaunis koti 1928b, 2261.
- ¹¹ Kotiliesi number 5, March 1926.
- ¹² Jutila 1928, 2161–2163 On the Better Homes in America Movement McCabe 2016.
- ¹³ See, for example, Saarikangas 1993, 83, 208, 213.
- ¹⁴ Korvenmaa 2010, 39.
- ¹⁵ On home consumption and furniture see, for example Reimer & Deborah 2004.
- ¹⁶ ”Lopuksi tahdon kysyä: kuka kaupunkilainen pitää itsensä kyllin varakkaana

kustantamaan kokonaista kerrosta vieraitansa varten? Ei kukaan; jokainen asuu itse huoneissansa ja niin on tilaa ja mukavuutta arkioloissakin. Jos sentähden heitämme pois turhat, kolkot vierashuoneet niin saatamme saada enemmän tilaa ja mukavuutta arkioloissamme - - - - - Mutta minä tahdon vaan esittää että, tekemällä arkihuonetta, s. o. sitä, jossa perhe tavallisesti oleskelee päivän aikaan, hyvin tilavaksi, voidaan välttää sitä suurta salia - -." Karttuneista elämän kustannuksista, jotka seuraavat karttuvaa sivistystä. *Kansan Ystävä* 20.5.1882.

- ¹⁷ On *Kotiemme kauneus* by Edward Elenius, see Aaltonen 1997, 28.
- ¹⁸ Y.K.1910, 17. See also the writing of the architect Jalmari Kekkonen: Saarikangas 2002, 58.
- ¹⁹ Hauch 1912, 136.
- ²⁰ Palmqvist 1909, 23–24. On the design competitions arranged by the Finnish Society of Arts and Crafts see, for example Aaltonen 2010, 48–49.
- ²¹ Spólen 1926b, 408–409.
- ²² Spólen 1926a, 126–128.
- ²³ Kaunis koti: mitä tarkoittaa 1928, 1918–1919. According R. Craig Miller, for architects, the chair was the primary furniture form. See Craig Miller 1983, 307.
- ²⁴ Miestamo 1981, 52.
- ²⁵ Suomen Kuvalehti 32/1929, 1436.
- ²⁶ Sarantola-Weiss 1995, 90.
- ²⁷ ”Tyyliässä nykyaikainen, suomalainen henki.” ”Tyyli” was changed to ”muodoissa”. The criteria of *Suomen Kuvalehti*. *Suomen Kuvalehti* to Ornamo. Archive file 21 (competitions and exhibitions). The archive of Ornamo. Aalto University Archives.
- ²⁸ Kaunis koti, mitä tarkoittaa, 1928, 1918.
- ²⁹ Strengell 1929, 22; Kaunis koti, mitä tarkoittaa, 1928, 1919.
- ³⁰ See, for example, Karttuneista elämän kustannuksista, jotka seuraavat karttuvaa sivistystä. *Kansan Ystävä* 20.5.1882.
- ³¹ On Sparre, see Tamminen 2013.
- ³² Louis Sparre wrote: ”Poträttbeställningar är sällsynta och att försöka sälja ”tavlor” är nästan otänkbart. Det är ju nej modernt att ha tavlor på väggarna. Man skall ju numera bo i operationssalar, äta på operationsbord och sitta i gynologiska undersökningsinstrument.” Louis Sparre to Emil Wikström, Ljungbyhed Skåne August 12, 1933. The Emil Wikström Collection. National Library of Finland.
- ³³ See, for example, L. O. [L. Onerva, Hilja Onerva Lehtinen], Taiteilijain syysnäyttely III. Kuvanweistäjät. HS 12.11.1910. Onerva stated: ”Veistotaide on ulkoilmataidetta -- meillä viihtyy vain sisätaide.” L. Onerva (Hilja Onerva Lehtinen) was the first female art historian in Finland.
- ³⁴ On small bronzes, statuettes and busts, see, for example, Di Bello 2013.
- ³⁵ Bildhuggarförbundet firar sin 25-årsfest. Hbl 23.11.1935.
- ³⁶ Kaunis koti, mitä tarkoittaa, 1928, 1919.

- ³⁷ Rakas lähimmäinen 1928, 2160; Kauniita koteja 1928, 1960–1961.
- ³⁸ Kauniita koteja: savolainen pirtti, 1928, 1960–1961.
- ³⁹ Malla täti 1910, 154.
- ⁴⁰ Kauniita koteja: savolainen pirtti, 1928, 1960–1961.
- ⁴¹ Kaunis koti, mitä tarkoittaa, 1928, 1919; Pohjala 1927, 68–70. Kyllikki Pohjala stated: ”Meillä on Suomessa omat tyyppilliset kotimme. Mutta paljon vierasta ja outoa pyrkii koteihin. - - irrottaa vieras, pysyä omalla kotoisalla pohjalla.” On the flourishment of the interior design business in the USA, see Edwards 2011, 54–60. On the influence of the American films on the Finnish culture in the 1920s, see Immonen 1992, 14.
- ⁴² Massey 1997, 611.
- ⁴³ Svinhufvud 2009.
- ⁴⁴ Kaunis koti 1928b, 2261. The designers Gunnar Forsström (1894–1958) and Göran Hongell (1902–1973) were better known for glass works. On the notion of comfort, see Edwards 2004, 160–163.
- ⁴⁵ On the reception of the competition, see Strengell 1929, 19–22. On the reception of the first furniture fair, see Sarantola-Weiss 1995, 93–94; Karttunen 2006, 17–20; Aaltonen 2010, 85.
- ⁴⁶ M. W. 1927, 622–624.
- ⁴⁷ Strengell 1929, 19–22.
- ⁴⁸ Strengell 1923; 1929, 20–21.
- ⁴⁹ Prytz 2013, 21; Wickman 2013, 105.
- ⁵⁰ Strengell 1923; 1929, 20–21.
- ⁵¹ Pohjala 1929, 1949–1950; Strengell 1923; Strengell 1929, 20–21.
- ⁵² Sarantola-Weiss 1995, 92.
- ⁵³ See also Perers 2013, 154; Cieraad 2010, 289–299. According to Irene Cieraad, the loft with its open-plan living space and focal kitchen island is today considered most prestigious.

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